

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Eastern Interior Field Office
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**NOAA Parcel G Relinquishment
Environmental Assessment (EA)
DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2017-0016
Serial Number F-025943**

April 18, 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Fairbanks Command and Data Acquisition Station (FCDAS), also known as the Gilmore Satellite Tracking Station, is located east of Fox, Alaska in a valley within an 8,855 acre federal land withdrawal. In 1965, PLO 3708 established the withdrawal for the FCDAS, which was administered by NASA until 1989 when PLO 6709 transferred control of the withdrawal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In 2008, BLM issued PLO 7710 to extend the withdrawal through 2029. The FCDAS facilities are concentrated along Eisele Road in the western portion of the withdrawal. The remainder of the withdrawal is predominantly unimproved forested land that serves as a buffer zone to block external radio interference from hindering the FCDAS mission. NOAA filed a Notice of Intent to Relinquish on a 709.17 acre portion of the withdrawal with the BLM Alaska State Office on October 18, 2016, stating that they have determined that the subject lands, identified as Parcel G, are no longer needed to fulfill their mission.

The subject lands are included in the General Purposes Grant selection application F-029454 pursuant to Sec. 6(b) of the Alaska Statehood Act as amended (PL 85-508). Two previous partial relinquishments of the withdrawal, covered under this same selection grant, were tentatively approved for conveyance to the State of Alaska in 2008 and 2011.

There are three current land uses related to Parcel G:

- The site has three State of Alaska RS2477 designated trails, which cross through Parcel G: RST 650 Gilmore Trail/Fairbanks Creek Connector Trail, RST 644 Cleary Summit – Gilmore Dome Trail, and RST 1931 Gilmore Hill Road.
- There is an existing BLM Right-of-Way (R/W) FF90548, for a 138 KV power transmission line, containing approximately 5 acres, crosses through sections 7 and 8 in the northern portion of the proposed relinquishment. In addition, BLM is currently processing R/W application FF097267 for an existing fiber optic line wholly within the same R/W corridor.
- Fairbanks Gold Mining Inc., (FGMI) is currently conducting exploratory drilling within the proposed relinquishment under BLM permit FF096399, issued in 2014, and set to expire in September of 2017.

Land Description and acreage:

Parcel G consists of 709.17 acres and is located approximately 6.5 miles north and west of Fairbanks and is within the PLO 3709, as amended, boundaries.

Legal Description:

Fairbanks Meridian, Alaska

T. 2N., R. 2E.,

sec. 7, SE1/4SE1/4

sec. 8, SW1/4SW1/4

sec. 17, W1/2 (portion of),

sec. 18, E1/2 (portion of),

sec. 19, NE1/4 (portion of),

sec. 20, NW1/4 and portions of S1/2

The areas described aggregate 709.17 acres.

a. Purpose and Need for Proposed Action

Purpose: The purpose of the action is to determine if the notice of intent to relinquish a 709.17 acre portion of a public land withdrawal held by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), under PLO 3709 as amended, meets the requirements listed in 43 CFR 2372.1-2 and whether or not the lands are suitable for return to the public domain for disposition under the general public land laws.

Need: The need for the action is established by the BLM's withdrawal authority under FLPMA (Pub. Law 94-579) §204 and responsibility under 43 CFR 2370 to respond to withdrawal relinquishment requests from holding agencies.

b. Decision to be Made

This EA discloses the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action or alternatives to that action. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) describes the findings of the analysis in this EA. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern Interior Field Office Manager is the Deciding Official. His decision and the rationale for that decision will be stated in the attached Decision Record. Based on the information provided in this EA, the BLM Manager will decide whether or not the lands included in the notice of intent to relinquish are suitable for return to the public domain for disposition under the general public land laws.

c. Conformance with BLM Resource Management Plan(s)

The *Fortymile Resource Management Plan (2016)* specifically addresses the BLM's role and responsibilities for withdrawal relinquishments on pages 64-65 under *2.2.17.4 Withdrawals*:

Goals

Where the BLM determines withdrawals from the public lands laws are not necessary, those lands would be open to the public land laws

Lands-35: Recommend retaining federal agency withdrawals (e.g., NOAA, military, GSA, FAA) until no longer required by the agency. Regulations in 43 CFR 2370 and following will govern the process for an agency to relinquish lands or interest in lands, in whole or in part, when no longer needed. Once an agency has filed a complete notice of intent to relinquish to

the BLM and appropriate General Services Administration (GSA) regional office the BLM will follow the appropriate regulations and the Authorized Officer will make a determination as to suitability of the lands or interest in lands for return to the public domain. If the lands or interest in lands are determined suitable for return to the public domain the Authorized Officer will notify the holding agency that the Department of the Interior accepts accountability and responsibility for the property in accordance with procedures found in 43 CFR 2374. If the lands or interest in lands are determined to be unsuitable for return to the public domain the Authorized Officer will request concurrence from the appropriate officer of the GSA and upon receipt of the concurrence will notify the holding agency to report as excess property the lands and improvements or interest in lands to the General Service Administration in accordance with procedures found in 43 CFR 2374. (Table 3.3b, "Existing Withdrawals to Other Agencies in the Planning Area" Eastern Interior Proposed RMP/Final EIS)